



AETC News Clips

Randolph AFB, Texas



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Blue to green to bust

Web Posted: 01/22/2006 12:00 AM CST

Sig Christenson
Express-News Military Writer

Lt. Lea Lato is among a few good male and female Air Force officers who've joined the Army under the Pentagon's "Blue to Green" program.

A precious few.

Eighteen months after the program was announced, just 417 airmen and sailors have agreed to shed their blue uniforms for Army green, even though the Air Force and Navy have been paring tens of thousands from their ranks.

That total comes from Air Force and Navy personnel commands and varies from figures provided by the Army, but the lack of enthusiasm is obvious.

When given the choice of joining the Army or returning to civilian life, many are opting for business suits and 9-to-5 jobs.

Asked if Blue to Green is a flop, Army spokesman Paul Boyce said that "given the fact that each day we are working with the American public and every individual recruit, each recruit counts toward the overall goal."

When Blue to Green was unveiled July 28, 2004, the Army's personnel chief, Lt. Gen. Franklin L. "Buster" Hagenbeck, said he knew "that anyone who looks closely at today's Army will find a lot to be excited about — we are growing, and we need experienced people to lead that transition."

Even according to the Army's numbers, the excitement over Blue to Green has been muted — at least so far.

The Army said Blue to Green took in 271 enlistees and 125 officers last year. An Army spokeswoman, Lt. Col. Pamela Hart, had no more specific information.

Stars and Stripes, a daily newspaper for U.S. troops stationed overseas, last summer cited an Army officer as saying 3,400 transfers were expected to go green, and Newsweek last year reported 3,500 were anticipated.

Army Lt. Col. Bryan Hilferty said Friday that he did not know if any goal had been set. Whatever the case, Blue to Green will continue.

Lt. Gen. Robert L. Van Antwerp, chief of the U.S. Army Accessions Command, said 80,000 letters had been sent to troops in other services informing them about the program.

Army supporters think the crossover of hundreds of airmen, sailors and Marines is a positive

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development, even if the numbers have been modest.

"I think it's a good news story that you had that many wander over," said retired Lt. Gen. Ted Stroup, deputy chief of staff for the Army from 1994 to 1996, who oversaw a successful Vietnam-era program to entice engineers in other branches to his service.

The Army's principal aim in Blue to Green was to recruit young enlistees and officers to serve in such fields as law enforcement, health care, communications and intelligence — the field Lato, 24, of Olympia, Wash., will go into.

Now in public affairs, she chose her words carefully when talking about her new career and often used "excited" to describe her emotional state as she prepares to join the Army this spring.

But Lato volunteered for the assignment only after receiving a letter stating that cuts were being made in her career field and that she would not be reclassified into a new skill area. She faced a hard choice: Join the Army and stay in the military or become a civilian again.

She had dreamed of an Air Force career, and Lato didn't want to hang up her combat boots. She'd spent time around the Army while a student in the University of Washington's Air Force ROTC program and figured she could handle its stricter, more buttoned-down culture.

An Army News Service report unveiling Blue to Green in the summer of 2004 reported that more than 1,000 sailors and airmen had gone to the service's Web site, answered a questionnaire "and indicated intent to transfer."

But it didn't happen.

Lawrence Korb, an assistant defense secretary in the Reagan administration, said few in the Pentagon probably expected much from the program. People are partial to their service, he said, and conflict in Iraq has hurt the Army as it has tried to recruit troops and retain veterans.

"They're grasping at straws," he said. "It's not going to solve the Army's fundamental problem, which is they're bogged down in Iraq."

Retired Army Lt. Col. T.R. Fehrenbach, a veteran of the Korean War, said the Navy and Air Force also have far different cultures. Iraq and its myriad risks might help explain why airmen and sailors aren't moving to the Army, he added. He recalled the Korean War, when the Army drafted civilians as the Air Force and Navy swelled with volunteers.

"The Army is a more arduous service than the Air Force," said Fehrenbach, columnist and author of "This Kind of War," a history of the Korean conflict. "The Air Force doesn't go out and live in holes as a rule. It doesn't do constant patrols."

Pfc. Stephen Phillips, 33, of Stoneham, Mass., outside Boston, said the Army is more like a stern father and the Air Force is closer to the fun uncle. In the Army, he said, rules and regulations are followed to the letter and there is no sense of collegiality about it — as there was during his Air Force days.

"I prefer it straight," said Phillips, who left the Air Force in 1995 and now in the Army at Fort Sam Houston

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training to become an operating room technician. "They don't ask you, they just say it and (they) expect it to be done, and they don't have to be nice about it."

Fehrenbach predicted Lato would adjust once she becomes a soldier.

There'll be some changes for sure. No more monthly Air Force fun runs with family, friends and fellow blue-suiters. They'll be replaced by thrice-weekly pre-dawn formation runs, twice-yearly physical training tests, lots of "hoo-aahs!" and a likely posting to Iraq.

"There are a lot of things to be apprehensive about, but being positive about it is how you get through it," Lato said. "I'll be fine. I'll just have a lot of new things to learn."



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FEMA restarts shuttle to center at KellyUSA

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Ron Wilson
Express-News Staff Writer

Federal disaster relief officials announced Friday they have resumed a shuttle service from the KellyUSA VIA bus stop to the federal Disaster Recovery Center.

The service will allow hurricane evacuees going to the Federal Emergency Management Agency center by bus to avoid a two-mile walk from the bus stop to the recovery center in KellyUSA's Building 1537.

"We've known this was a problem and we've been working on it for some time," said FEMA spokesman Jack Heesch.

Santos Villarreal of United Services, which got the contract, said the shuttle would run during recovery center business hours, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, and Saturday morning.

Jack Graham, senior FEMA official in San Antonio, said the center has been so busy it's staying open as late as 6 p.m.

Evacuees are facing a number of deadlines affecting their assistance and must stop by the center or call FEMA's hot line at (800) 621-3362.

Villarreal said his shuttle would wait until the last evacuee was finished before shutting down.

Graham asked evacuees to try to get to the center before 3 p.m. so they wouldn't be caught in the late-afternoon rush.

The shuttle will run today for the Louisiana Recovery Planning Day. The event, starting at 10 a.m., is sponsored by the state of Louisiana and will be held at Alamo Community College District's Advanced Technology Center at KellyUSA Building 210 at 312 Clarence Tinker Drive.

According to a state Web site — www.lra.Louisiana.gov — evacuees can share their ideas via feedback forms, notes placed on maps and charts, and one-on-one discussions with planning team members about long-term recovery.

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The few, the proud, the moms and dads

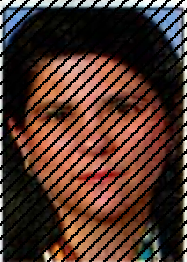
Pregnancies aren't
hurting the military,
but its outdated
policies could.

By Eric Solano
Special to the Express-News

Often, history is the story of things that weren't supposed to happen. Five years ago, who could have imagined that the United States would have sent more than 60,000 women to war in Iraq and Afghanistan?

Ever since the draft ended in 1973 and the slow, painful integration of women into the military began, opponents of equality under arms have predicted disaster upon disaster if American women ever went to war.

The disasters haven't happened. No significant combat failures due to the presence of women. No massive breakdowns in discipline. And — a matter conspicuous by its absence — no epidemic of pregnancies.



SOLANO

In 2004, I spent a month in Iraq, embedded with combat troops in the Sunni Triangle, studying American servicewomen. In 2005, I spent another month in Afghanistan, with Provincial Reconstruction Teams and their combat protection. For several months, I pestered Pentagon officials to give me definitive pregnancy statistics. For reasons ranging from "we don't have them" to "you can't have them," they've refused.

But they did give me some rough pregnancy discharge statistics, showing a mild spike in 2002, then a leveling off: 2,136 in fiscal year 2002, 2,643 in 2003, 2,691 in 2004, declining to 1,227 for the first half of 2005.

Some of this may reflect a normal shaking out of inept or unwilling troops; some may be

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the difference in pregnancy policies and deployment lengths between the services. And, of course, no one will ever know how many women delayed planned pregnancies or had abortions so they could deploy with their units.

However, just because pregnancy hasn't been a major problem, that does not mean the military is doing a good job of handling it. I've come to believe that a new article of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, addressing pregnancy and establishing service procedures, is needed.

Military pregnancies come in

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three basic flavors: "Congratulations!", "Oops!" and "Get Me Out of Here!"

"Congratulations!" pregnancies are those planned and/or wanted by a woman during her military career. Many women "schedule" these during their nondeployable assignments. Not everyone, male or female, can be "good to go" all the time and it's going to be a long war; they'll get their chance. Walk the halls of the services' war colleges and command and staff schools and you're likely to see a lot of maternity uniforms. And if you're going to have morning sickness, what better place than the Pentagon to do it?

"Oops!" pregnancies are just that. Sometimes they impact on unit readiness, sometimes not. They tend to cluster among the more junior enlisted women and perhaps among senior women who've been trying to get pregnant without success.

These women should be treated on a case-by-case basis, with attention given to circumstance, prior service record and desire to remain in the military. Each service should set up high-level boards to handle these cases; this is not a matter properly left to a woman's immediate superior or unit commander. The goal should be to minimize disruption while hanging onto good women for the long term.

As for "Get Me Out of Here!" pregnancies, these constitute deliberate malingering and worse, and they should be handled by the military justice system. It should be hard — very hard — to get a court-martial conviction, as hard, perhaps, as trying to prove desertion. But in flagrant cases,

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ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE PHOTO

With more service members, such as Nicole and Richard Washburn, deploying overseas, it's time for the military to abandon policies based on the notion that only men leave their children to go to war.

Civilians are not unfamiliar with the difficulty of balancing work and life, but it is incredibly difficult for servicewomen who hope for a military career and increasingly so for servicemen.

the servicewoman (and the father, if a military member) should receive, at the least, discharge under other than honorable conditions.

All very fine. But an objection inevitably arises. Shouldn't these women be home with their children? Yes. But shouldn't their fathers also be? More than anything else, "Oops" pregnancies and the generally greater nondeployability of women than men in

the Reserves and National Guard reflect a widespread feeling among servicewomen that there is no good time to have a child. (It is common for servicewomen who want to do well by their families and their service to go into the Reserves or Guard when it is time to have children.)

Civilians are not unfamiliar with the difficulty of balancing work and life, but it is incredibly difficult for servicewomen

who hope for a military career and increasingly so for servicemen.

Since Abraham Lincoln's day, the government has recognized an unalienable obligation to care for the families of veterans. It's time to extend that right of care, depending on circumstances and needs, to the families of active-service members and to abandon policies based on the notion that only men, leaving their children with their stay-at-home wives, go to war.

Erin Solaro is the author of "Women in the Line of Fire" (Avalon/Seal Press, 2006). Send her an e-mail her at aretean@netscape.net.

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Meridian, CAFB cooperation a 'natural,' commander says

By Earl Descant
edescant@cdispach.com

A closer relationship between Columbus Air Force Base and the Naval Air Station in Meridian is all but assured, military officials said this week.

"We want to continue to restart the coordination between the Navy and the Air Force training," Commodore Curt Goldacker, commander of Training Air Wing One at the Meridian facility, said Wednesday during a visit to CAFB.

"It's been done in the past and I'd like to see if we can get it restarted," added Goldacker after meeting with CAFB officials to begin working out a dual-training plan, known as the Good Neighbor Project, between the

Navy and Air Force bases. "There really is a lot we can do together.

"This has happened in the past, and I don't really know why it stopped, but we'd all like to see it resumed," Goldacker continued.

The mission makes perfect sense, said Goldacker, noting the training mission at the Naval Air Station in Meridian almost directly mirrors the flight training mission at CAFB, with slight variations such as flight-deck landing training to prepare pilots to land on aircraft carriers.

"We were serving joint missions and projects in Iraq and Afghanistan and it just makes sense to continue this coordination in our training," Goldacker said.

As a start, Goldacker envisions an instructor pilot exchange

between the two bases, where both sides can pick up expertise that can be incorporated into training.

"Just seeing things like the debriefing techniques done here are different and valuable," said Goldacker, commenting on some of the Air Force procedures he saw during his visit.

The two bases are similar in other ways. With 3,800 employees, Meridian is close in size to CAFB, where 3,100 people work. Both bases also have strong ties to their communities.

"The communities do so much for the Department of Defense. We have very good relationships with our communities," said Goldacker. "It just makes sense that we begin working together."

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Tyndall AFB, Fla.



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Day-care Program puts military kids in their parents' shoes

By Daniel Carson News Herald Writer 747-5071 / dcarson@pcnh.com

or children in military families, it is not always easy to comprehend what their parents go through during an overseas deployment. To try to answer some questions children may have, Tyndall Air Force Base staged a demonstration Saturday to show kids what their parents go through during the deployment process. Sgt. Ken Tate said 92 base children, ages 5 to 17, signed up for the exercise.

Tate, the family readiness manager for the base's Family Support Center, said the children started at 8:30 a.m. and ended their day at 2:30 p.m. with a "welcome home" ceremony.

He said Saturday's event was the first of its kind at Tyndall and took three months to plan. The children were preregistered through the support center, Tate said.

"Most of these children, their parents either are deployed or will be deployed soon," Tate said.

Inside one of the base's hangars, children with camouflage face paint divided into four "chalks," or groups, and received tutorials on how to put on chemical warfare suits. The kids also learned the different sorts of munitions and ordnance and their functions. They sampled a vegetarian and chicken with salsa Meals Ready to Eat, or MRE, and watched a demonstration by the base K-9 team.

The children also went through a processing line that included mock vaccinations and dog tag distribution.

Deborah Preissler and her husband, Tech Sgt. Carl Preissler, brought their children, Carlie and Alexander, to the demonstration.

Deborah said her husband had been deployed overseas several times and her children never had seen what he went through in the deployment process.

She said Carlie, 10, had asked what her father did, how long he would be gone and where he went for deployment.

"We thought this would be a good thing for them, to experience it like Dad does," Deborah Preissler said.

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Standing nearby, Carl Preissler said he thought the deployment demonstration was “pretty close” to the real thing.

“There’s a lot of down time when you’re not moving or doing anything,” he said.

As some children sat on the hangar floor and ate lunch, others lined up to get a peek inside the cockpit of an F-15. Two instructor pilots gave the kids a brief description of the plane.

Later, the children received a tour of both the C-130 transport aircraft and KC-135 Stratotanker, a refueling plane.

Master Sgt. Mary McHale said that seeing the insides of planes like the C-130 allowed the children to see how their parents travel when they are deployed.

She said the one-day demonstration was a basewide effort, with every group at Tyndall having some kind of involvement. Although McHale acknowledged she did not know if the base planned to hold another demonstration for children, she said that, based on the success of Saturday’s event, it was possible.

At the end of the day, Tate said, the welcome home ceremony featured parents waving flags and banners to show the children “it’s a big thing” when they return from deployment.

Tate said coordination and logistics, such as securing the aircraft, were the biggest challenges in putting on the event.

He said military children sometimes are overlooked in terms of the hardships they endure, such as frequent moves and long periods away from their parents.

“We often thank the military and their spouses for the sacrifices they make, but sometimes we forget about the kids,” Tate said.

Master Sgt. Bryon Nelson, superintendent for readiness and mortuary officer for Tyndall Air Force Base, shows children the intricacies of a Meals Ready to Eat, or MRE, during the Jr. Real Air Patriots Training On Readiness, or RAPTOR, program Saturday at the base. The event shows children what soldiers go through when deploying.

Children of parents serving in the Air Force climb aboard a KC-135 Stratotanker refueling aircraft Saturday during the Jr. Real Air Patriots Training On Readiness, or RAPTOR, program.

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Training jets being readied for combat

By Mladen Rudman Florida Freedom Newspapers

EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE

U.S. Air Force squadrons from Panama City to Fort Walton Beach to Las Vegas are recycling F-15s. The 33rd Fighter Wing at Eglin Air Force Base near Fort Walton Beach is converting seven Eagles it received from Tyndall Air Force Base into combat worthy warplanes. Seven F-15s once used by the Eglin wing will serve as “aggressor” warplanes at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev. The shifts are part of a plan to bolster Nellis’ air-to-air combat training. Turning an F-15 previously used by students into an Eagle ready to shoot down MiGs and Sukhois costs about \$150,000, said Master Sgt. Robert Barrasso of the 58th Aircraft Maintenance Unit. The fighters receive everything from new insignia, including big “EG”s on their tails, to upgraded avionics. They also are inspected stem to stern. Conversion becomes easier the more maintenance crews work on the aircraft. “Of course, in the beginning there was a learning curve to it, but we’re getting it down to a fine science,” said Barrasso.

It takes a couple of days to turn a student plane into one ready for war.

Tyndall’s F-15s arrived at the 33rd Fighter Wing “blank” — without unit markings. Airmen at the wing’s corrosion control facility inspect aircraft for rust, dings and other surface problems. Repairs are made and parts that need repainting are painted.

Senior Airman George Brown was working on an Eagle built in 1982 on Thursday afternoon. He said Tyndall’s F-15s were not in the best shape when they arrived, but it was not too much trouble to prepare them for refurbishing.

Airmen mask off parts such as the canopy and cover engine nozzles with plastic sheets. The Eagles are then washed, primed and painted. Insignia are added and the planes are pushed along to the next phase.

Brown explains his work to civilian friends and troops outside his field with an analogy.

“It’s body work like at a garage for cars, only we do body work on fighters,” he said.

Debi Haussermann / Florida Freedom Newspapers Jason Brown, left, and James Dillard, both airmen first class, cover an F-15 Eagle in plastic at Eglin Air Force Base on Thursday to prepare it for painting. Jets previously flown at Tyndall Air Force Base are being readied at Eglin for combat.

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